

~~SECRET~~ 16

~~LIMIT DISTRIBUTION~~

September 23, 1969

SECRETARY'S DELEGATION
TO THE
TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, September, 1969

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

September 20, 1969

5 p.m.

U.S. Mission, New York

SUBJECT: Syrian Detention of Israeli TWA Passengers

PARTICIPANTS:

U.S.:

The Secretary
Ambassador Charles W. Yost
Ambassador William B. Buffum
Mr. Richard F. Pedersen
Mr. Joseph J. Sisco
Mr. Alfred L. Atherton, Jr.

FOREIGN:

Foreign Minister Abbas Eban
Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin
Ambassador Shabtai Rosenne (UN)
Minister Shlomo Argov
Mr. Ben Yahaman

DISTRIBUTION: S S/PC NEA
U TNR/OD Amembassy TEL AVIV
J WH L
C CIA E
D DOD
S/S VP

The Secretary inquired whether there was any recent information about the two Israeli passengers of the hijacked TWA plane who were still being held by the Syrians. Mr. Sisco noted that he had raised this question with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and that the latest comment from Moscow was that the matter was not closed. We were awaiting a further reply through the Soviets; perhaps the Secretary could bring this up when he saw Gromyko.

7 V 1 2 2 5
X R G L 27 Sep 69 - 4 SK
X R G L 27 Sep 69 - 4 SK

③
Corded

Don't make

~~SECRET/NOFORN DISTRIBUTION~~

- 2 -

Ambassador Yost reported that he had seen Ambassador Tomeh, the Syrian Permanent UN Representative, who had said that the door was not closed. Syria was still considering the matter and meanwhile urged that there be no public agitation. Tomeh had said it was difficult to see how Syria could release the two Israelis without some corresponding action by Israel. When Ambassador Yost had pointed out that this would encourage further highjacking, Tomeh had said that the linkage of the Israeli and Syrian actions could be obscured by having Israel wait two weeks or so before carrying out its part of the arrangement.

Foreign Minister Eban said the idea of linking the release of the two Israelis with Israel's release of the two Syrian pilots in its custody was intolerable. Each time Israel captured a Syrian prisoner of war Syria would simply highjack an Israeli plane. Eban suggested three steps for the USG to consider: 1) An approach directly to President Atassi through the Italians; 2) Continued efforts to mobilize the international aviation community, inter alia, by urging Mr. Hammarskjold of IATA not to relax his efforts; and 3) Mobilizing resistance to Syria's candidacy for a Security Council seat.

Ambassador Yost said that, while we were not particularly enthusiastic about the Syrian candidacy, Syria was the choice of the Asian bloc. Eban commented that perhaps some Asian countries--for example Thailand and the Philippines--might be willing to withdraw their support.

The Secretary said that we would try out the first two ideas. Mr. Eban had suggested and explore the possibility of the third.

Mr. Eban said that fortunately some of the public pressure in Israel on this question had been relieved since the report of the Red Cross, which had been permitted to visit the two Israelis, that they were physically all right.

The Secretary described the highjacking incident and Syria's detention of the two Israeli passengers as indefensible. The U.S. had done all it could to secure their release. It had not been possible, as some had suggested, for us to keep the other passengers in Syria until the Israelis were allowed to leave. We hoped, the Secretary added, that Israel was not contemplating any action against

~~SECRET/NOFORN DISTRIBUTION~~

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~

- 3 -

Syria as a result of this situation. Eban replied that Israel's interest was in getting the two Israelis out; Israel would cooperate with all international efforts. In his view it would be useful for the Secretary to speak to Gromyko. The Secretary said he would do so and asked Mr. Eban to give us any other ideas which might occur to Israel.

Mr. Eban commended the Italian efforts with the Syrians. As for Secretary General U Thant, Eban doubted that anything more could be done on his part. Mr. Sisco noted that the Secretary General had raised with the Israelis the question of the two Syrian pilots detained in Israel. Eban replied that the present situation made it more difficult to discuss this matter. The Secretary said he tended to agree with the Israeli view that the two cases could not be equated; one involved passengers of a commercial aircraft while the other involved two military pilots.

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~